

Dear House Health Committee,

I am testifying in opposition to H8346/SB 2181, regarding repealing the sunset provision of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact.

I noted on the video that there was no testimony on this bill that will affect physicians across the state significantly, and introducing the bill at this late time in the legislative session does not provide time for proper vetting and input. Additionally, the Committee is against, I believe, a similar bill, pushed by many of the same out of state, for-profit businesses, that provided a much easier path for out of state telemedicine in RI, H7149, the Uniform Telehealth Act.

I was never in favor of the Compact when it passed with the 3 year sunset provision 2 years ago, and I am still very much against it. I was not part of the conversation when the sunset provision was added. I would like the **current** Committee members to know that his bill failed maybe 5-6 years in a row before being passed several years ago with the sunset provision.

In short, this bill is being pushed by the national **for-profit** telemedicine industry, companies including **Teladoc**. This bill will do nothing and possibly harm the existing physician practices around the state by diverting **money** that could be spent on the local healthcare community, instead, out-of-state.

Please keep in mind that telemedicine is very much alive and working in Rhode Island. At a House Health Committee hearing (Feb 8, 2024) Richard Glucksman of Blue Cross testified that 1 in 5 office visits in Rhode Island are by telemedicine, a large portion, behavioral health. **Everyone here, including the payers, is happy with the current telemedicine regulatory environment.**

In order for a physician to practice, he or she must maintain a license in **each** state at a cost of between \$250 and \$600 **per state per year**. (The cost is roughly the same or possibly more in the Compact.) So, while it may make sense for a Rhode Island physician to purchase a Massachusetts or Connecticut license, it makes absolutely no sense to

obtain other licenses, or many licenses, for all but a very few physicians, except out of state teledocs.

In fact, by making it easier for the physicians of RI to obtain out of state licenses, RI physicians may be forced to obtain licenses in adjacent states in order to protect against board actions and insurance companies cutting off malpractice protection. At the current moment, the situation with practicing “incidental” telemedicine for RI patients who are physically located over state boundaries is vague. This legislation may force the issue and cause RI physicians to spend another \$1000 or so every year for a bunch of rarely used licenses, which they currently are not doing, because they only have physical offices in RI. I am not sure what the answer is, but some sort of reciprocal licensure between states may be the answer.

The current time for a physician to obtain a RI state medical license is about 28 days according to the Dept of Health. As the Massachusetts legislature has not adopted the Compact after 8 years of trying by Teladoc, adopting this Compact in RI will do nothing for Rhode Island patients who are unable to obtain telemedicine service from doctors in Boston. This bill will do nothing for Rhode Island physicians seeking to practice in Massachusetts.

I cannot say this enough, instead of throwing money down the drain on out-of-state telemedicine, the state should force the insurance companies to increase the reimbursement for our own primary care practitioners which would increase the supply of providers here.

Not only will money spent on supporting primary care within the state increase the availability of services, but the state will **recoup** much of that money on **tax revenues** collected within the state. On the other hand, much of the money spent on services from companies like Teladoc will go towards Teladoc’s **administrative costs** and **profits** and **dividends**. It is a for-profit company with investors and shareholders.

Although I do not know why the Compact has not been **implemented** even though it was passed two years ago, I am aware that the Compact requires **physicians** to undergo **criminal FBI background checks** which is

problematic, as this can be fairly invasive and not now required for an RI license. Dealing with differences in the way medicine is practiced in other states, particularly abortion and birth control, may also have been problematic. The Department of Medical Licensure and Discipline may have more information on this.

I would be in favor of some type of license reciprocity between Rhode Island and the academic centers of excellence in Boston or other true academic centers of excellence around the nation. I would not offer reciprocity to purely telemedicine companies like Teladoc, that do not offer or bear the unreimbursed burden of maintaining an office to examine patients in person, medication refills, filling out disability forms, specialist referrals, continuity of care, knowledge of local healthcare environment, etc, etc.

I would be happy to take any further questions. Thank you.

Very sincerely,

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